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In Sociology and Social Psychology

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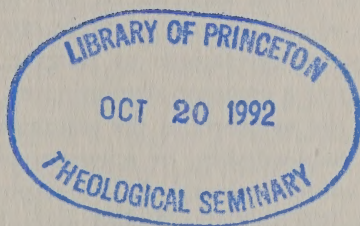
# RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES OF COLLEGE TEACHING

In Sociology and Social Psychology

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Talcott Parsons

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## PREFACE TO THE SERIES OF ESSAYS

Three years ago Professor George F. Thomas of Princeton University, in a letter to The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, urged the need for careful studies by natural scientists, social scientists, and humanistic scholars concerning the religious issues, implications and responsibilities involved in the teaching of their respective disciplines. This pamphlet is part of a series instituted by The Edward W. Hazen Foundation for the purpose of carrying Professor Thomas' suggestion into the sphere of fruitful inquiry and discussion. Under the sponsorship of The Foundation, the undersigned committee has enlisted the aid of distinguished scholars deeply interested in the relations between religion and higher education. Each of these scholars will discuss the problem in its specific pertinence to his own field of learning, his own conception of his intellectual and spiritual responsibilities to his students, to the institution which he serves, and to society in general. He will address himself primarily to fellow-teachers in his field, secondarily to students and to interested members of the educated public.

The committee responsible for the survey wishes to steer a course between two opposite dangers; that of a theological vagueness which would produce nothing but noncommittal generalities, and that of a dogmatism which would alienate all but a small number of readers. The views of the authors of these essays may vary from liberal to orthodox interpretations of religion. Throughout this diversity, however, runs a common denominator which is shared by the authors and by the members of the committee. Religion is not nature-worship, or man-worship, or science-worship. It is not the totality of human value. Although it is metaphysical, ethical, and humanitarian, it cannot be equated with metaphysics, or ethics, or humanitarianism. Religion is man's quest for communion with an ultimate spiritual reality completely independent of human desires and imaginings. Religion apprehends this Absolute Reality and Value in faith, and seeks to give concrete embodiment to the ineffable in creed, cult, and conduct. The creative power of the universe is not an intellectual abstraction but an objective entity, a Divine Being. Although God infinitely transcends our human nature and understanding, He most potently reveals Himself to those who conceive of Him in personal terms. Thus symbolized, He becomes

for us not merely Cosmic Mind, but Creator, Judge and Redeemer of mankind.

Within this broad but positive consensus the authors of these essays will exercise complete freedom in expressing their personal views. As regards the relevance of religion for higher education there is also general agreement among those associated with this survey. The cleavage which divides intellectual from spiritual life is probably the most ominous defect of modern civilization. "High religion and intellectual enterprise belong together," says Professor Robert L. Calhoun. "Each gains from close association with the other. The two in conjunction, but neither one by itself, can move with hope toward more effective conquest of the chaos that again and again threatens to engulf human living. That way lies whatever chance we may have for a more humane world."

In his essay *Colleges, Faculties and Religion*, appraising consultations with more than fifty faculties, Professor Albert C. Outler reports that "Education is by way of being reformed with little or no regard for the possible contribution of religion to its reformation. For a very tangled skein of reasons, it has come to pass that, in the name of tolerance and the democratic spirit, American educators (whatever their private beliefs and convictions) have in fact suppressed the consideration of the problems of the religious interpretation of reality and human existence in the educational process." He sees, however, evidence that religion will become increasingly influential in American higher education if it can receive "a fair hearing in the open forum of American academic discussion. . . . Where this is done, there is usually a vigorous and generally favorable reaction from both faculty and students."

To obtain such a "fair hearing" from a large academic audience is the purpose of these essays. Even in these days of "general education," however, the modern scholar remains a specialist. He is likely to be less interested in the general problem of the place of religion in higher education than in the specific problem of how religion pertains to the teaching of his particular subject. This more specialized aspect of the question deserves more careful investigation than it has hitherto received. At present, therefore, these essays are being published as separate pamphlets so that each may appeal directly to those concerned with the discipline which it discusses.



It is hoped, however, that the project may prove fruitful enough to justify later publication in a single volume or perhaps in three shorter books devoted respectively to the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.

HOXIE N. FAIRCHILD, *Chairman*

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ALBERT C. OUTLER


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This essay will appear as a chapter in a volume, *Religious Perspectives In College Teaching*, to be published by The Ronald Press in 1952. For a limited time college teachers may secure complimentary copies of individual essays dealing with their own or closely related fields. Additional copies for colleagues or graduate students are available at 25c each. Inquiries or orders with remittance enclosed should be addressed to The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, 400 Prospect Street, New Haven 11, Connecticut.

Essays have been published on English Literature, History, Economics, Philosophy, Classics, Music, Physical Sciences, Experimental Psychology, Anthropology, Political Science, Biology, and on the Preparation of Teachers.

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## RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

TALCOTT PARSONS

The following topics are briefly considered in this essay: (1) introductory definition of terms, (2) motivation of religious beliefs and behavior, (3) complications of religious and secular motivations, (4) religion as a source of creative innovation, (5) some features of the religious situation in America, (6) the sociologist as teacher.

The present essay is written from the point of view of the social scientist, not that of the representative of any religious denomination. The social scientist, like any scientist is not, however, only an investigator, though specialization in that direction is inherent in the development of a science it must be balanced by other functions which derive from the fact that science is an integral part of the culture of a society, and the profession which specializes in a science is part of that society. It is universally recognized that imparting its findings not only to colleagues but to non-specialists through publication and teaching is one of the major functions of the professional group which specializes in any science. This function derives above all from the fact that science contributes to human life in two directions, first in giving men knowledge about the world in which they live so that they may orient themselves more intelligently to it, and second in making it possible, through technological applications of the findings of science, to satisfy human needs and wants more effectively.

These characteristics of science in general are eminently important in the case of the social sciences, because for every man his place in his society and culture, his relations to his fellows and their significance to him, constitute the most important part of the empirical world in which he lives. But the function of the teaching of science, if that term may be understood to include both publication and communication by the spoken word, is not merely a matter of imparting information in which others may happen to be interested, it is a responsibility in a larger sense, and preeminently so in the case of the social sciences. For though it must be part of the credo of the scientist that to know is good in general, if not the only or the supreme good, he must also become aware that in human social affairs particularly, specific changes in the state of knowledge in a field may often have seriously disturb-

ing consequences, because our interests and sentiments have come to be bound up in particular systems of beliefs about ourselves, our fellows, and the place of all of us in the world. Hence the responsible social scientist does not teach without regard for the consequence of what he is doing to human individuals and to social groups any more than the responsible physician, let us say, blurts out disturbing diagnostic findings without regard to their effect on the emotional state of his patient. This is not in either case a justification for suppressing truth or what we believe to be truth, but it is very much a caution as to our responsibilities with respect to the *ways in which* we handle the dissemination of truth.

These considerations of course apply preeminently to the field of religion, since religion is so greatly a field of strong sentiments and "touchiness"—indeed it is proverbially a field about which responsible and considerate people refrain from arguing indiscriminately. Nevertheless the social scientist has an obligation to set forth what he feels to be some of the most relevant facts and generalizations about the relations of religion and society, and particularly to the college student because the latter is in process of assuming the role of a mature, intelligent and responsible person, who must be aware of the "facts of life" if he is to live up to his responsibilities. But he must also be made aware that the facts are seldom equally congenial to all people, and perhaps some of them are difficult for virtually all to face. Some of the facts we will cite will be highly congenial to the "religionist" though many of them will be more congenial to those of one denomination than of another—and therefore highly disconcerting to the "positivist." Some of the facts, on the other hand, will be disconcerting to the religionist, for it is often hard to believe that a force with which one feels himself to be deeply identified, can be seriously involved in responsibility for events which are contemplated with horror.

Part of the problem is concerned with the meanings of words, therefore before going farther we had best define our terms. First the sciences which here concern us in their perspective toward religion. Sociology we will define as the science interested in the institutional structure of social systems, and the motivational processes in human beings which are involved in the maintenance and change of institutions. Social psychology is an interstitial science between psychology and sociology, much like biochemistry in the natural sciences. It is concerned with the study of motivational processes



of behavior and the structure of personalities, in the context of their relevance to social systems and their problems, notably their institutional structure.<sup>1</sup>

A religion we will define as a set of beliefs, practices and institutions which men have evolved in various societies, so far as they can be understood, as responses to those aspects of their life and situation which are believed not in the empirical-instrumental sense to be rationally understandable and/or controllable, and to which they attach a significance which includes some kind of reference to the relevant actions and events to man's conception of the existence of a "supernatural" order which is conceived and felt to have a fundamental bearing on man's position in the universe and the values which give meaning to his fate as an individual and his relations to his fellows.

Defined in this way a religion or religious system will include at a minimum: (1) a more or less integrated set of beliefs concerning entities which are "supernatural," sacred, or, as Durkheim said, "set apart" from the ordinary objects and events of utilitarian or instrumental significance for human affairs and interests on his relation to which the meaning of man's life is fundamentally dependent; (2) a system of symbols, objects, acts, persons, empirical and non-empirical which have the quality of sacredness and in relation to which men express the emotional states relevant to the religious sphere, in short, a system of expressive symbols; (3) a set of more or less definitely prescribed activities which are interpreted as important and often obligatory in the light of the beliefs involved, but which from the point of view of the instrumental interests of daily life are "useless" in that they do not "accomplish anything." These activities will usually be prescribed for different types of occasions, forbidden on others and may be differentiated for different statuses in the social group; (4) to some degree a sense that "we" who share common beliefs of this character, and participate in what is felt to be an integrated system of such activities, constitute a "collectivity"—a group which by virtue of that fact is bound together in what Durkheim called a "moral community"; finally, (5) a sense that man's relation to the supernatural world is in some way intimately connected with his moral values, with

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<sup>1</sup>For elucidation of the meaning and implications of these definitions see especially Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1951, particularly Chapter XII.

the nature of the goals he is called upon to live for and the rules of conduct he is expected to comply with. The sharing of these common moral values as well as more specifically "religious" beliefs and practices will be constitutive of the moral community spoken of above.

In addition to these five minimum features of what the sociologist would call a religion or religious system, certain others may be expected to appear in different types of religious systems. These are all aspects of the differentiation and corresponding modes of organization of the social relationship systems which religious beliefs and practices involve. The most important aspect of differentiation is the differentiation of the roles of individuals and of classes of them relative to those of others participating in the same religious system. There are in turn two main aspects of this differentiation. The first is the differentiation of types of individuals and groups relative to their relations to the sacred and supernatural sphere independent of functions on behalf of the religious collectivity, while the second is differentiation of roles with such specialized functions. In the first direction we find such types as the individual ascetic or monastic order. In the second falls the minister or priest who functions on behalf of his congregation. The prophet can be regarded in both contexts, as having established a *new* relation to the supernatural and as the leader of a *movement* to implement its implications in the life of society.

Closely related to the differentiation of roles is the development of the character of the religious collectivity itself. There are several important aspects of this but two may be singled out for mention here. One is the mode of integration—or lack of it—of the religious collectivity itself with the rest of the group structure of the society. Thus it may be an aspect of a single overall collective organization as in the case of the most non-literate societies, or there may be a distinctive religious grouping as with the Christian church or denominational organization. The other aspect is that of the internal organization of the religious collectivity above all the ways and extent of the development of formal organization of explicit canons formally interpreted and enforced, and the like.

The analysis of the conditions determining the specific type of belief or symbol system, of activities or moral roles, of differentiation of roles, of modes of collectivity organization, constitutes one main aspect of the sociology of religion in a more detailed sense.



The other main aspect concerns the ways in which differences of religious systems in these respects are interdependent with other aspects of the social systems of which they are a part. Unfortunately limitations of space preclude entering into the fascinating analysis of these problems here. The reader should, however, keep in mind that solid grounding of many of the empirical generalizations stated in later sections of this essay would require carrying through the relevant analysis on this level in full detail. It is only space limitation which makes this impossible.

### MOTIVATION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR

With the above sketch of some of the principal components of religious systems on the social level in mind we may now turn to some aspects of the "social psychology" of religion, of the characteristics of man as an "actor" in a situation, and of that situation, which helps us to understand his need for and relations to religious institutions. We will develop this theme in two sections; in the present one we will attempt to sketch some of the main sources of the motivation to religious belief and behavior, and in that following to indicate some of the complicated interrelations between religious and secular motivations on this level.

Man is distinguished from the other animals, from the point of view of the social scientist, above all by the fact that he is a creator and bearer of culture. He creates and lives by systems of symbols and of artifacts; he not only modifies his environment but his orientation to it is generalized in terms of systems of symbolic meaning; he communicates with his fellow men through language and other symbols; he perpetuates and develops his knowledge, and he expresses his feelings, not directly and crudely, but in elaborately symbolic form.

A "culture" is not and cannot be just a discrete collection of disconnected artifacts and symbols, but to a greater or lesser degree must constitute a *system*. It must, that is, have coherence as a set of orientations which tie together the many particular aspects of men's experience and needs. Above all it has three types of functions. In the cognitive aspects, as a system of beliefs, it attempts to answer man's questions about himself and the world he lives in, and we all know that we cannot consciously hold contradictory beliefs without strain. Secondly, it provides "forms" or expressive symbols for expressing and communicating his feelings, forms which

conform to standards of "taste." Finally, and from the sociological point of view perhaps most important, it provides standards for evaluation above all the moral standards which regulate man's conduct, particularly in his relations with his fellows. It can be proved quite definitely that once the step from regulation by "instinct" to the plastic dependence on learned patterns of behavior has been taken by man as organism, a society of men cannot subsist without what sociologists call the institutionalization of a relatively consistent system of patterns of culture, above all of moral values.

The role of culture in human life implies that men must be concerned, in a sense somewhat different from the animals, with the *meaning* of their experience, that is, not merely with whether a given experience gratifies a wish or fills a need or contrariwise involves pain or deprivation, but also with the *fit* between the *expectations* of experience which have been defined for him in his culture, and the *actuality* which he himself experiences.

There is in every system of human action, in every society, a smooth, "normal" pattern of everyday functioning, of ways in which people go "about their business" without particular strain, where the means available to them are adequate to attain the goals they have been taught to strive for, and where the all-important other people fulfill their expectations. But if all human life were like that, religion would certainly not have the significance that it does. We would be much more likely to think of the "problems" of life as mainly of a practical "utilitarian" kind, to be solved by good "horse sense."

There are certain fundamental respects in which this is an inadequate picture of the human life situation. In whatever kind of society *some* human expectations, in the fulfillment of which people have acquired a deep emotional investment, are doomed to frustration. These frustrations are of two main types. One of them consists in the fact that men are "hit" by events which they either cannot foresee and prepare for, or control, or both; to which, however, they must make major adjustments, sometimes practical but always emotional. The type case of this kind of frustration is the occurrence of premature death. Certainly the fact that though we all know we have to die almost no man knows when he will die is one of the cardinal facts of the human situation. But not only for the person facing death himself, if he has time to think about it,



but quite clearly for the survivors, there is a major problem of adjustment, for the simple reason that the human individual as an object of emotional attachment is of such fundamental importance. Even the loss of a "beloved enemy" can, we know, be very upsetting. Though religious orientations to death, which are universal and fundamental to religion, contain many shadings of belief about the "life after death," the fundamental feature of this orientation is not "wishful thinking." As one historian of religion has put it, "No major religion has ever claimed to be able to 'beat death'."<sup>2</sup> The dead are dead, and cannot be brought back to life; but the living must still adjust themselves to that fact. From the point of view of the social scientist, what they believe and do in this situation has significance as a set of "mechanisms" which in some ways facilitate this adjustment. From the secular social point of view to hold funeral ceremonies does not "accomplish anything," the functions of such ceremonies are "latent," but they may none the less be highly important.

In general it is extremely conspicuous that ceremonialism not only concerns the directly bereaved, but directly symbolizes the belongingness of the deceased and of the bereaved in larger social groupings. On the one hand these larger groups which are not so directly affected give their "support" to the bereaved, but on the other they set a "tone" for the occasion which in general says, "the traditional values of the society must be upheld." Death must be only a temporary interruption, the important thing on one level is to "get over it" and to go on living. Though it is by no means obvious, there are many features of funeral ceremonies which are closely similar to those of psychotherapy.

There are other types of uncontrollable events besides death which have what in certain respects is a similar bearing on human interests, natural catastrophes being one of them. Furthermore it should be noted that not only frustration in the usual sense, but unexpected and therefore "unearned" good fortune may also have an upsetting effect and require processes of adjustment. Perhaps our own Thanksgiving fits in that category. The Pilgrim Fathers may well have felt that they were extremely "lucky," or as they said, favored by God, to have survived their first terrible year in the wilderness at all.

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<sup>2</sup> A. D. Nock, in unpublished lectures.

A second type of frustrating experience is connected with what has come to be called in a special sense "uncertainty." By this is meant the very common type of situation where there is a strong emotional investment in the success of certain human endeavors, where energy and skill undoubtedly count for much, but where unknown and/or uncontrollable factors may and often do intervene to upset any "reasonable" balance between action and success. The exposure of agriculture the world over, with few exceptions, to the vagaries of uncontrollable and unpredictable weather, is one of the most important examples. No matter how industrious and capable a farmer may be, his crops may be ruined by drought or flood. The field of health is another classical example, and there are a variety of others. The unpredictable character of human conduct in many fields, from love to war, is also prominent.

In all these situations rational techniques must of course loom large; no farmer ever grew good crops by magic alone. But these are the classical situations in which what anthropologists call magic flourishes. Whatever the distinction made, magic is always continuous with religion; it always involves some relation to the strains occasioned by uncertainty, and to human emotional adjustment to such situations. Magical beliefs and practices constitute, from the point of view of social psychology, mechanisms of adjustment to these situations of strain. They give an opportunity to "act out" some of the psychological products of that strain, thus to "place the blame" for the frustration—most conspicuous in the cases of belief in witchcraft. They give people the sense of "doing something about it" in areas where their rational techniques are powerless or untrustworthy. Above all they act as a tonic to self-confidence; they are a protection against allowing the risk of failure to lead to a fatalistic discouragement, the attitude that since success cannot be assured, it is no use trying at all. At the same time, magic may act as a stereotyping agency in situations where empirical knowledge and technique are applicable, and thus block technological advance—this in spite of the fact which Malinowski makes so clear, that magic cannot take the place of rational technique. The Trobriand Islander does not believe that he can make up for failing to cultivate his garden properly by more and better magic; it is a supplement, not a substitute.

The frustrations of established expectations of which we have been speaking pose "problems of meaning" in a double sense. On



the one hand, man, being a culture-bearing animal, does not merely "take it" when things go as he does not expect. He has to give these things a meaning, in the first instance emotionally, so that his adjustments to such experiences can become integrated in the *system* of experience, which means among other things that his reactions are coordinated and organized with those of his fellows; he can communicate his feelings and receive adequate responses to his expressions of them.

But beyond this, as we have noted at the beginning of this section, the culture in which a social group lives constitutes a more or less integrated system. As such it must have a certain level of consistency; it must "cover" the principal ranges of men's experience in such a way that all of them to some degree "make sense," together as a whole.

Besides the direct problem of emotional adjustment to the frustration of particular experiences, the "generalization" which is involved in the integration of a cultural system brings up two further particularly crucial "problem" areas. The culture links the experience and expectations of any particular individual or sub group with those of others in a society. There is not only the question of why must this happen *to me*, or to those close to me, but why must it happen at all to anyone? Above all, since men universally seek gratification of their wishes and needs there is the generalized problem of suffering, of why men must endure deprivation and pain and so unequally and haphazardly, or, indeed, at all, and, since all societies must live by moral standards, there is equally the problem of "evil," of why men violate the moral standards of their society and why the "economy" of rewards and punishments fails, as it *always* does to some extent, to balance out. Good fortune and suffering must always, to cultural man, be endowed with meaning. They cannot, except in limiting cases, be accepted as something that "just happens." Similarly it is impossible to live by moral standards and yet be wholly indifferent either to the extent of conformity with them or to the fate of conformists and violators respectively. It is necessarily disconcerting that to some degree "the good die young while the wicked flourish as the green bay tree."

The sociologist is in a position to state that some significant degree of discrepancy between expectations in both these respects and the actual state of affairs in a society is inevitable, though it varies greatly in degree and in incidence. Both expectations of

gratification and moral standards vary from society to society, but this fundamental fact of discrepancy seems to be a constant, grounded in the nature of human personality, society and culture and their relations to each other.

This complex of circumstances constitutes from a certain sociological point of view<sup>a</sup> the primary focus of the differential significance of religion in human life. It is made up of aspects of the life situation to which, men being what they are, they cannot remain emotionally indifferent, and which at the same time in the long run they cannot evade. But adequate adjustment on either the emotional or the cognitive level to these situations cannot be worked out through the "ordinary" techniques and attitudes of practical utilitarian life. The content and incidence of the problems vary, but their presence is a constant. Almost another way of putting the essential point is to say that tragedy is of the essence of the human situation.

In one sense all religious ideas involve what may be called a "transcendental reference"; this indeed is what has been meant here by saying that they concern the "supernatural." But this need not imply that the "locus of values" is put primarily in the "other" world. Indeed "naturalism" in the sense of sanctioning the interests of this life in health, wealth, happiness, long life, is more common than not in religious traditions. But the existence of the transcendental reference plus the tension which necessarily to some degree obtains between "ordinary" expectations and the discrepancies of experience with reference to them, may be related to a development by which the primary locus of value is placed in the transcendental sphere itself, in a life after death, or in some other form of "salvation" from the involvements of ordinary human social life. Indeed the problem of balancing the books of the human economy makes this very likely, though the "displacement" may not be into a transcendental world, but may emphasize a future state of human society, as in Western "progressivism" or "revolutionary" utopianism. Furthermore, the degree of radicality of repudiation of the things of "this world" may vary greatly, from a desire to "reform" some secondary unsatisfactory features of it, to the view that ordinary secular human life is intrinsically evil, that man is sunk in

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<sup>a</sup> More positive aspects of religion, independent of the strains inherent in the human situation, may be equally important, but are more difficult to get at in the context of the intellectual traditions of modern social science.



utterly hopeless degradation and sin, and that *only* in transcendental terms is any positive value whatever to be found.

Whatever the situation in these respects, the religious problem par excellence in the more generalized sense is the "justification of the ways of God to man," is "making sense" out of the totality of the human situation, both in the cognitive sense of a "theory" in which the discrepancies and the established order can be brought within a single view, and in emotional adequacy so that man can adjust to his own fate and that of the societies with which he is identified. Thus though religious ideas on the sophisticated levels are "philosophical" in content, we will not speak of them being religious so long as the basis of interest is merely intellectual, the solution of baffling cognitive problems. They become religious only so far as a commitment in emotion and action to their implications becomes involved, as, in that sense, to quote Durkheim, they are "taken seriously."

From the psychological point of view, then, religion has its greatest relevance to the points of maximum strain and tension in human life as well as to positive affirmations of faith in life, often in the face of these strains. It is most deeply and intimately involved with the "emotional" problems of men, precisely as these are related to the higher levels of culture, to the problems to which in the widest sense man finds it most difficult to adjust. We will attempt to follow the implication of these facts in two main directions. First, in the next section we will go somewhat more in detail into some of the psychological complexities which appear in the religious field, then in that following, into some of the larger scale social phenomena which are related to the same context.

Our immediate concern is the association of religion with some of the major situations of strain in human life, strain in which the "emotions" are deeply involved. Psychologically we are in a position to say something about certain typical phenomena which appear in reaction to such situations. We will assume that strain consists in the actual or anticipated frustration of established expectations relative to the needs of the personality. In the first place experience of such frustration in a situation, especially if it has been repeated, will tend to produce anxiety, an expectation of the likelihood of being "hurt" which operates in advance of the actual event and motivates behavior oriented to avoiding the dangerous situation or to coping with it in such a way as to prevent or mini-

mize the damage. Anxiety may come to be more or less generalized from the original sources of frustrating experience, to apply to objects and situations which are felt, often irrationally, to be sufficiently similar, also to be dangerous. There may thus, as in certain phobias, be displacement of anxiety on a symbolic representative of the original object, because the motivation is ambivalent and the object is both feared and a source of attraction at the same time.

This ambivalence of motivational reactions to strain is a fundamental feature of it. One is not subjected to emotional strain in this sense unless the object or situation "means" something, is emotionally important. There is, therefore, always a motivation to retain the meaningful, gratifying relation to the object and continue to receive satisfaction in relation to it. But at the same time there is the fact that a fully satisfactory relation is blocked, and therefore there are reactions of resentment and hostility directed against what is *felt* to be the source of the frustration. Strain therefore tends, in addition to anxiety about the future development of the situation, and in the presence of objects and situations felt to be dangerous, to be accompanied on the one hand by feelings of need for the desired relation to objects and by phantasies of the fulfillment of these needs, and on the other hand by feelings of resentment and hostility and phantasies of aggressive action against the source of injury. Finally, one other feature of human psychology is so important that it needs to be mentioned here. The human child is more deeply dependent on adults than is any other young animal, and we know that this dependency is an essential condition of the process of socialization. "Maturity" is in one sense a state of having "outgrown" childhood dependency needs, but they are never completely eradicated, and situations of strain certainly tend to reactivate them. Hence it may be presumed that on the positive side of reaction to strain there will be disposition to find objects on which to be dependent, or to intensify dependence already present to a greater than normal degree.

A person under strain is thus inevitably a person in conflict in a psychological sense. He has impulses which cannot all be carried out in action, and must resort to what are called "mechanisms of defense," like repression, displacement, projection, reaction-formation and phantasy-gratification, if the pressure cannot be sufficiently eased so that the impulses themselves subside. There are of course enormous variations in degree of the intensity of such conflicts, and



of how far they have affected the structure of personality itself; in the latter case "neurotic" phenomena appear, whether they are culturally defined as such or not.

We have said that strain, and hence emotional conflict, must be defined as relative to expectations. It is clear that the most important expectations men have are those relative to human beings and their action, not only others but themselves. Any individual has grown up in a particular circle of human associations and relative to a particular set of institutionalized patterns of culture. Therefore the negative component of his reactions to strain is largely constituted by what may be called "alienation" from the persons and the normative patterns in relation to whom and which he has lived. Alienation is always *relative* to the social situation in which it arises, it is always hostility to some persons and some patterns, more or less generalized to others.

This excursion into the psychology of reaction to strain has been necessary as a basis for understanding the social psychology of what is involved in many of the concrete phenomena of religion. Most emphatically religion in general is not a "pathological" phenomenon in any psychological sense. It is an essential part, in the broad sense in which we have defined it here, of the institutional organization of a normal society. But because of its peculiarly close relation to situations of strain the same components of human motivation which are prominent in the phenomena of psychopathology are also often to be found in the religious sphere. In some cases religious institutions constitute effective "mechanisms of social control" in that they serve to "cope with" the products of strain in such a way as to protect the normality of the personality and the orderly functioning of the society. But sometimes the "deviant" aspects of the motivational complex may get the upper hand, and behavior in the name of religion can be highly disruptive both of personality and of social order. When this is said it must, however, be remembered that "deviance" is defined as relative to a particular pattern of social order. Therefore there is the inherent problem of discriminating creative innovation, which from the sociological point of view is very often founded in religion, from merely destructive disturbance of the social system. This essay in no way wishes to disparage the enormous significance of the role of religion in the former context, but at the same time must insist that the record shows a substantial element of the latter. The two

cannot, empirically, appear in complete dissociation from each other.

We may develop this point in terms of a few concrete examples. It has been noted that a component of alienative motivation is inherent in reactions to strains. But the conditions under which alienative, hostile, impulses have been aroused are not by themselves sufficient to account for the form in which they are expressed.

Some of this hostility is generated by the impact of genuine abuses judged by the moral standards of the society—abuses rightly met with indignation. More of it may often be generated in less obvious ways, by elements of conflict and strain not directly intended by anyone, and for which no one can reasonably be held responsible. In any case, expression directed against the immediate sources of strain is only one of the possible channels of expression—it is often possible for a variety of reasons that hostility should be “displaced” on other objects.

The very fact that religion involves an inherent transcendental reference is an important element of this situation. Because there is a “higher” authority which cannot directly hold its adherents responsible, action which is dubiously legitimate in more human terms may be carried out in the name of this higher authority as one form of displacement, and hence distortion of the more genuine values of the society.

It is by some such process as this that religious actions can often become the vehicle for expressing feelings of resentment which are humanly understandable but often difficult to justify in terms of any moral or religious values. The numerous occasions on which the adherents of various branches of Christianity, which itself glorifies universal love, have treated others with violent and bitter hostility, if for example they refused to conform with the tenets of the particular denomination in question, may serve to illustrate this fact. Such considerations may help one attempt to understand how, in the 17th Century, the religion of love came to be the focus of a whole series of religious wars which nearly destroyed European society. The “religionist” cannot treat such facts so simply as to say that what happened was merely that religion was “corrupted” by evil political or economic influences. Its very corruptibility would not be understandable unless hostility were very intimately involved with the system of religious sentiments itself.



The other side of the motivational complex which produces hostility under strain is the production of unrealistic phantasy gratifications and "utopian" ideas. Some of this element is undoubtedly "projected" into the transcendental sphere and helps account for such phenomena as the persistent strains of "goody-goody" wish fulfillment phantasies about the blissful existence in heaven after death. Such a strain though present in Christianity is by no means universal but is balanced by the theory of Transmigration in Hinduism with its belief that one will have to live through an endless series of terrestrial lives with all the attendant grief, and that, except for mystical techniques there is no escape from the "wheel of Karma." Furthermore in Christianity itself, the wish fulfillment element is balanced by equal extremes in the other direction, by conceptions of terrible Divine punishment which border on the pathological in their attribution of vindictiveness and inhumanity to God, and thus are exceedingly difficult to reconcile with the conception of love. They indicate an extreme degree of what psychologists call "intra-punitiveness," the turning of hostility against the self.

But the positive, utopian side is sometimes, in religious contexts as elsewhere, directed to the ordering of life in this world and hence a utopian strain is prominent in many religious movements. The effect may be to subject the adherents of such movements to much practically unnecessary torture and grief because their religious beliefs, often with regard to many matters of legitimately secular concern, interfere with a sensible handling of the situation. It is difficult in this field to discriminate genuine differences of value from distortions of reality, but the latter certainly are not absent.<sup>4</sup>

Cases of this kind are more frequent than is generally realized. It is not meant to single out any particular group as an example. Furthermore cases involving natural science can certainly be matched by cases with respect to the practicability of social arrangements. Thus the tendency of some Christian sects to repudiate the use of force or coercion in any form as radically evil can be shown

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<sup>4</sup>One type of case is illustrated by the beliefs about health which have been prominently institutionalized in Christian Science. There seems to be no doubt that much very real suffering and many premature deaths of persons whose lives could have been saved have been occasioned by the religiously motivated refusal of Christian Scientists to avail themselves of the services of the medical profession.

sociologically to have had two types of effects. On the one hand, since there are reasons to believe that *some* coercion is inseparable from the minimum conditions of social life in a high culture, it has relegated the adherents of such beliefs to a position of minimum influence on the higher cultures. A group which insists on the acceptance of conditions which realistically it is impossible to grant, *must* be rebuffed by precisely the most responsible, and therefore morally serious, elements of the society in which they attempt to proselyte. But, secondly, in cases where the adherents of such a doctrine have in fact come to assume positions of responsibility in the organization of social relationships, they have been directly faced with the problem of the *control* of coercion and the use of force. Wherever a religious movement has survived over any considerable period it has had to accept *some* use of coercive means on its own part in order to cope with the situation. There are limits to social utopianism as there are to the control of the body. Beyond a certain point mortification of the flesh, however high the level of spirituality, becomes suicide. Similarly beyond certain points, which are admittedly difficult to identify, neglect to provide the minimum conditions for an orderly society is social suicide; a religion which pushes certain doctrines regardless of such limits is, from the social point of view inevitably a disruptive influence.

This is of course in no way to say that any particular current state of affairs with respect to the control of the use of force is to be considered ideal. Particularly in a time when we live under the shadow of the possibility of extremely destructive war it would be criminal folly to minimize the seriousness of the problem. But a sociologist may venture the opinion that learning to *control* force more effectively is more likely to minimize the risk of war and limit its destructiveness, than is turning one's back on that responsibility by refusing to be implicated in the moral evil of the use of force in any way.

One final point. We have noted that alienative motivation often leads to the venting of hostility not only against the abuses of the secular world, but more generally. This type of reaction may very well be combined with the disposition to withdraw from a secular world defined as more or less radically evil. It is by some such path that the religious doctrines of the need for radical salvation seem to have evolved. The conception of the supernatural provides the opportunity to transfer what we have called the locus of values



completely to the transcendental world. This world, then, in the extreme case, becomes only something to escape from, not something to live in. It is seldom that doctrines have been pushed to such a radical extreme. But when they are, if the religion is to survive as a movement, certain things will have to happen. Religion is, in important respects, a reaction to the inevitable strains of ordinary human life. But in certain respects it may sometimes create an order of strain to which it in turn must react by modification of the movement itself.

#### COMPLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR MOTIVATIONS

Human society differs from the phenomena of "nature" precisely in the sense and to the extent to which it is itself a product of human action, of human ideas, aspirations and values, and not of the "conditions" to which men are subjected. There is a very important sense in which to a degree man *is* what he wants to be, or what he believes he should be. But at the same time this "voluntaristic" aspect of human society is intermeshed with subjection to a whole set of given conditions, which are not creatures of man's will but must be adapted to. This does not in the least mean that such conditions cannot be creatively used, for obviously they can. But man does not succeed in controlling or using them solely on his own terms as it were. He has to learn how they work and take advantage of those ways in which they can be made to work which fit his needs and desires.

The familiar examples of physical technology will illustrate the point. Man is sometimes said to have "annihilated space." Taken literally this is sheer nonsense. Man does not simply, godlike say that spatial limitations are a nuisance, let them cease to exist. He comes laboriously to understand how movement in space works in the physical world, and on the basis of that understanding is able to devise means of transportation and communication which are able to transport men and goods farther, quicker and cheaper than before, or to transmit communications across spatial distances. He adapts himself more effectively to the *conditions* governing relations in space; he does not annihilate space. Above all, though he changes many concrete things in the physical environment, for example, by building railroads which did not exist before, he does not change the *laws* by which physical phenomena and processes operate; he understands them and uses them, which is a very different thing.

There is no reason whatever to believe that things are in these respects essentially different with the "human material" out of which organisms, personalities and social systems are composed. Man can create his own society within limits to his own desire because he can control and manipulate this "human material." But he cannot control it in contravention of the laws of its own "nature," but only by conforming with the possibilities and opportunities presented by those laws. He may well hit on some methods of control by "chance," that is by processes other than a rational understanding of the situation and how to take advantage of it. But none the less his successes and failures are a function of the "conformity" of his action with the processes which govern the material he tries to influence.

The above position is stated, not primarily as a philosophical position, but in accord with the whole of this essay from a scientific standpoint. Many religious adherents will interpret both the laws governing the physical world and those governing "human nature" as ordained by God for His own good reasons, and similarly the values which men attempt to realize in this world as prescribed by God. Whether this philosophical view or some other is taken does not affect the task of the scientist, or the methods by which he comes to understand these laws. Newton was a devoutly religious man but his formulation of the laws of gravitation was not a deduction from his religious beliefs. There is conflict only when a religious claim is advanced that *specific* knowledge of how "nature," human or otherwise, works has been divinely revealed, and that therefore empirical investigation, the results of which do not agree with this Revelation, is superfluous. On this point, in relation to society as well as other fields the scientist has a definite position. He fully recognizes many limitations both on his current knowledge and on what scientific methods can produce. But he cannot admit a priori and without scientific investigation that within the specific field of his competence, *in principle* any other source of specific knowledge must be held to supersede his own. To do so would be tantamount to the abjuring of his profession. To this extent and only to this extent does he take a philosophical position. It is of course freely admitted that he does not know the limits of his science in detail; but he holds that the *only* way to find them is to try; that it is not legitimate to say on a priori grounds that a whole range of problems is scientifically insoluble, unless actual and

competent attempts have been made to demonstrate it. Such assertions have been repeatedly made in the intellectual history of the Western world, and repeatedly proved by the event to be false. Even today certain humanists and even natural scientists are saying that social science in principle is impossible, at the very same time that social scientists themselves are proving them wrong by actually doing the allegedly impossible, that is, creating a science.

Consideration of the above points has a bearing on a discussion of the process of adaptation of a religious movement to the exigencies of continuing life in human society. The essential point is one of relativity of points of reference. *Some* of the empirical features of human society are particular to the specific society in which the movement itself originates, and such a movement will, in the nature of the case, attempt to change many of these and will be likely to be partially successful in doing so; religion is, in this sense, a creative source of social innovation and change. But *some* of the features of every society are necessary conditions of the long-term existence of society itself, or of societies of particular kinds and where, as has frequently been the case, the religious movement attempts to abolish these it will not succeed, but on the contrary will have to accommodate itself to them.

As we have noted, a religious movement, particularly one with a strongly transcendental emphasis, usually starts in a position of alienation against many of the features of the current society, which will include both religious and secular institutions. In the case of early Christianity it was on the one hand "paganism," and on the other the structure of the Roman Empire, particularly as symbolized by "Caesar." Such a group is in the nature of the case a "minority group." The most it can expect immediately is a certain tolerance from the rest of the society which enables it to exist at all, and perhaps to spread. The evidence is that Roman society and its government were unusually tolerant and that this fact had much to do with Christianity getting its chance to survive, along with the fact that its first adherents were on the whole inconspicuous "little people," who did not come to the attention of the authorities.

Throughout the earlier phases, of course, the movement was dominated by the expectation of the imminent Second Coming and had no thought of the long-run problems of its relations to a going society. This was the background of the famous phrase "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's," in that "Caesar" was



responsible for the secular world as it was, and Christianity had no thought of attempting to "take over." The minimal organization of the little community of Christians themselves was the extent of Christian concern with secular society along with the concern for preventing contamination from the evil world and for spreading the Gospel.

The process which led to the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman state by Constantine was long and complex, but from that time on the movement was certainly faced by the necessity of a quite fundamental change, one which was in some ways obscured by the process of decline in Roman society itself, a process which was by that time far advanced and was probably to some degree helped along, though certainly not fundamentally "caused," by the spread of Christianity itself.

In a very broad way, ever since that time there have been two great trends in Christianity with respect to these problems. One has been the main trend, the development of the idea of the institutional church as an integral part of the Christian society, the other the conception symbolized by the phrase "my Kingdom is not of this world" when used to motivate an attitude ranging from aloofness to active hostility to *all* things worldly, *including* the institutionalized church and the regimes of "Christian" monarchs and governments. There have been innumerable shadings and accommodations, as in the integration of the religious orders in the Catholic Church itself, but the two fundamental trends have remained.

From certain religious points of view it is difficult to see how the proponents of the anti-institutional trend have been wholly wrong, for it is quite clear to the sociologist that it is impossible to be the institutionalized religion *of* a concrete society without being implicated up to the hilt *in* that society. We may illustrate this fact by the problems of power and of wealth, which have continually disturbed Christianity. It is in the nature of a proselytizing religion that it wishes as many converts as possible and that it wishes these converts to guide their lives as completely as possible by the tenets of the religion. But history will certainly bear out the generalization that large-scale mastery or influence over the minds and spirits of men seldom if ever occurs without organization and leadership. Further, ascendancy over the spiritual life is not fully separable from ascendancy over conduct in many spheres of life. But in the

nature of the case an organization which has "control" over the conduct in important respects of large numbers of people has "power." A church may or may not define power over men as intrinsically evil. But precisely because and as a result of success in its religious mission, it itself becomes a "great power" in the society. There is no escape from this dilemma. The only question is *how* the power is to be used, not whether the church shall or shall not have power. This is a dilemma as deep as the great dilemma of the "knowledge of good and evil." It is not possible to have knowledge of the good without also knowledge of the evil. It is not possible to choose the good without having the possibility of choosing the evil. It is not possible to influence the lives of men, without all the implications of having taken the responsibility for influencing them, that is, without being involved in the moral dilemmas of power.

In proportion as the society became a Christian society, in just that proportion the church became the most important power in the society. The mediaeval church eased part of the burden by sharing power with the secular authority. But when the church convicted a man of heresy in an ecclesiastical court and "the state" proceeded to burn him at the stake, the church was necessarily responsible for the burning even though all physical punishment was formally in the hands of the "secular power," since heresy was equally a religious offense and a civil crime in a Christian society. Certainly in the mediaeval view it was the *religious duty* of the secular authority to burn heretics; they were just as much an agency of the Divine mandate as was the church itself. The Catholic Church has of course faced this problem squarely and accepted the responsibility, but this is only one of many illustrations of the fact that the church in Western history has been deeply involved in the problems of power. Furthermore, since power is the capacity to influence men as such, there can be no neat division between religious and secular power.

The case of wealth is parallel. Wealth is essentially a class of means of exercising power. It is control over the facilities necessary to meet human wants, whatever they may be. Certain trends within Christianity early developed the view that poverty was in itself a virtue, and that the truly religious should take vows of poverty. But poverty even for monasticism came to mean only that the control of wealth was transferred from the individual to the ec-

clesiastical corporation, not that "religion" was relieved of the temptations of wealth. So eventually the Christian church in its various capacities became the "owner" of something like a third of all the land of Europe. There is nothing surprising about this; a cathedral is inevitably a form of wealth, you cannot glorify God in stone and stained glass without creating something of value in the economic as well as the religious sense. The "treasures of the church" in land and buildings, in vestments and works of art are, proverbially, "priceless;" they constitute wealth in the most literal sense; there is no escape from this fact. Again the alternative is not *whether* or not the adherents of a religious movement are to acquire wealth, but *how* their wealth shall be used and controlled. And the more successful a religious movement is, in the purely religious sense, the more, necessarily, will it come to control a large proportion of the wealth of the society of which it is a part.

These examples will suffice to make the main point. But it may be added that there is a still deeper sense in which the institutionalization of religion, as the sociologist calls it, must involve it in the structure of a secular society in a two-fold way. We called attention to the fact that alienation against the institutionalized values of the going society is a prominent feature of religious movements in their early phases. To spread, a religious movement must almost in the nature of the case exploit people's dissatisfactions with their lives in "the world." The movement tends to appeal to people who are disposed to non-conformity, to disagree with their fellows, with the current moral practices and with the expectations of those in authority. But as a direct result of gaining ascendancy in a society, the "shoe is on the other foot" for a religious as well as for a radical political movement. If the movement is to consolidate its position of ascendancy, and stabilize its position in the society, it must create motivation to conformity with the expectations of an *established* order and of the authorities which are duly constituted in it. The mainstay of an established religion therefore cannot in the nature of the case be the *type of personality* which must be the spearhead of the rise of such a movement in a necessarily hostile environment. The question sometimes asked, what sort of treatment would Jesus receive in an established Christian community, is not without its point. Jesus was not a social revolutionary, but he was certainly a rebel. He said "It is written, but *I* say unto you" — something in conflict with essential parts of the



established tradition. He stood in self-conscious opposition to the duly constituted religious authorities of his day, to the "Scribes and Pharisees." Though of course there was much continuity in the tradition he founded, the function of Jesus was necessarily different from that of an ideal bishop of an established church; it is more than possible that one of his temperament would have stood in opposition to the bishops of a later age. But whatever the personalities certain aspects of this dilemma, like those of power and wealth, are inevitable. If a religion succeeds in its mission it must establish what is in *some* sense an orthodoxy, and it must oppose those who attempt to destroy orthodoxy no matter how high their motives may be, to themselves and to their followers.

Indeed, the ultimate paradox is that a religion which starts out to save men *from* the world, because of the very fact that it succeeds on this earth *as a religion*, that is, in influencing human society, *itself becomes the world*, at least one of the most important parts of it. Then those to whom, like the founders, the world itself is evil, must often if they are contemporaries be turned against by the very religion which institutionalized the point of view they represent. The successors of the *founders* must often turn against, thus in a sense betray, these founders because their attitude toward the world, if it includes repudiation of all worldliness, is incompatible with taking responsibility, in exalted or humble station, for the welfare of a religious organization just as much as of any other kind of organization. Thus there is a deep sense in which the tragic side of human life, which religion itself so profoundly expresses and depends on, is not only something to which religion helps men to adjust, but is part of the fate of religion itself; for religion, whatever the supernatural element of it, is inevitably a part of the way of life of human beings, and is caught up in dilemmas of the human situation just as much as any other part.

Perhaps the most important note on which to end the discussion of this particular problem is to point out that it is the teaching of sociology that religion, like every other phase of human society, can be *only relatively* stable. Men, in turning to religion, are sometimes motivated by a search for an ultimate security, for something which stands fast in the endless flux of human affairs. Many have felt they found it in the ultimate objects of their faith, in their relation to God. But religion *as human institution* cannot provide that ultimate security, for it too is subject to the flux. We will find

many prophets in the future as in the past who purport to set up *the* religious institution which can never fail. The sociologists' view is that *all* such promises are illusory. The Roman Catholic Church is one of the most successful attempts in human history to provide this unbreakable stability of institutional structure for religion. This is one aspect of the symbol of Rome as the "Eternal City." But even the Catholic Church is a human institution, subject to the vagaries of social change. It has undergone many transformations in its long history and certainly will undergo many more.

#### RELIGION AS A SOURCE OF CREATIVE INNOVATION

The last two sections have stressed some of the ways in which religion can be, and sometimes is, not only a way of helping men to adjust themselves satisfactorily to the elements of strain in their life situations, in both a personal and a social sense, but also in one sense a source of otherwise "unnecessary" strains. Stress on these facts should not, however, be allowed to upset a balanced view of the complex relations of religion and society. One reason they have been introduced is that there is a tendency for the American Protestant groups among which many of the readers of this essay will be found, to take, in common with American culture generally, a somewhat overoptimistic view, to understress the element of tragedy in which religion itself is deeply implicated. Religion is, quite correctly of course, held to be a "good thing" and hence there is a certain reluctance to believe that many things which, from the point of view of our social and religious values are not good, are also associated with religion. But this fact does not obscure the massive impression of the overwhelming positive place of religion.

In order to balance the impression, we may speak briefly of another main aspect of the significance of religion, namely, its place in the processes of creative innovation in cultural development. From the sociologist's point of view the moral patterns of value which are institutionalized in a society are at the very core of his theoretical interests, and these patterns in turn are heavily dependent on the ideas which give them cognitive meaning. In the nature of the case, as we have several times remarked, these values and these ideas are either directly of religious origin or most intimately connected with religion.

In most "primitive" societies, and in highly stabilized and traditionalized higher cultures, religion tends to be mainly a conservative force; it is as it were the balance wheel of the society which prevents it from departing from the established ways. So much is this the case that it is highly probable, for instance, that as Max Weber put forward cogently, the fact that a traditional priestly class did not have great social power in classical Greece was an essential condition of the great cultural creativity of the Greeks. Conversely the social ascendancy of the Brahman priestly caste in India is inseparable from the fact that Indian caste society is perhaps the most conservative large scale society the world has even seen.

But this relationship by no means holds without exception. The very fact of the association of religion with the areas of strain and tension in human life on the deepest emotional levels means that it is likely to be one of the main areas in which responses to such situations are creative rather than traditional. But for the same reasons this creativeness is very likely to be inextricably intermingled with turmoil and many of the types of "irrational" reaction of which we have spoken above. Furthermore the most creative periods of religious development tend also to be times of social turmoil rather than settled peace.

It is a remarkable fact that roughly the same period saw the development of Confucianism in China, of philosophical Brahmanism and the beginnings of Buddhism in India, and the prophetic movement in Judea, to say nothing of the beginnings of the great development of the classical culture in Greece of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. which certainly had a most important religious component as well as later religious consequences. In each of these countries, furthermore, it was a period of rapid social change and considerable unsettlement. The warring feudal principalities of China were beginning the process by which eventually a great unified empire arose. India likewise was involved in many internal conflicts, in the difficult relations between the Aryans and the indigenous populations, in feudal wars, and in rivalry for social supremacy between the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas. In Judea the Israelitic Kingdom had already seen its heyday and was gravely threatened by the rising power of Mesopotamia while, finally, in Greece the little city states were maintaining a precarious existence in relation both to each other and to the terrifying power of Persia



to the east. It was an age of turmoil in some respects comparable to our own across the whole civilized world.

It was in this age that, largely from religious sources, the great cultural systems of values which have guided civilization ever since took their shape. Confucianism, Hinduism and Buddhism have provided the main frameworks of the way of life of the great civilizations of the Orient, with the one major exception of Islam, which came later but was in many ways intimately related to Prophetic Judaism. The Hebrew Prophets were the authors of the world's first universalistic ethical monotheism who dared to say contrary to *all* previous religious tradition that all mankind is subject to the will of a single God and that their history has meaning in terms of His great plan for the development of the world He created. Greek society created the analytical and speculative intellect of Western civilization. Christianity came some centuries later, but in many respects may be treated as a great synthesis of the Hebrew and the Greek traditions. Without the background of Prophetic Judaism there would have been no universalistic ethical monotheism. But without Greek philosophy there almost certainly would have been no rational theology in the Christian sense. Indeed some of the most distinctive features of our Western culture undoubtedly stem from these sources.

Christianity itself arose in a similar situation in which society and human values were in flux. The Jewish people were undergoing, after many experiences in foreign rule, the difficult adjustment of absorption in the Roman Empire. That the adjustment was not easy is attested by the outbreak of the Jewish wars only a generation after the crucifixion of Jesus. The prevention of the absorption of the Christian movement in the community of the Jewish people, which was only settled by St. Paul, was one of the most decisive events of the history of civilization. But this could hardly have happened without the peculiar character of Roman imperial society with its extraordinary range of individualism and tolerance.

It was thus the great religious movements of the creative age of the seventh to fifth centuries B.C. which laid the foundation for the fundamental differentiations of the great civilizations for the next two thousand years, as Max Weber so clearly demonstrated in his remarkable comparative studies in the sociology of religion. Without taking the space to delineate the features of Confucianism,

Hinduism and Buddhism which differentiate them and the civilizations they have influenced from Christianity and the West, perhaps a few of the distinctive features of the latter may be noted.

The pre-eminent place should, in these terms, undoubtedly go to two fundamental patterns which run through the whole history of Christianity, namely what may be called "universalism" and "activism." Both are deeply involved in the special way in which Christianity conceived the transcendental character of its God, as Creator and Ruler of the world, standing outside and above it, not as an immanent principle of order in the universe, a conception which, with variations, underlies all the great oriental religions.

Activism means essentially that man's goals and values are conceived not primarily as concerned with adaptation to or escape from a given set of physical and social conditions, but with mastery over them. The prototype of the first attitude is found in Confucianism, with its orientation of the organization of a stable social order, sanctioned by a completely stable religion; that of the second is the great mystical religious orientation, the mystical absorption in "nature" of the Taoist, the escape from the Wheel of Karma of the Hindu mystic, or the Nirvana of the Buddhist.

In Christianity, on the other hand, the keynote through all its various forms is doing the will of God in spite of the obstacles presented in the situation, by *overcoming* the obstacles. This may mean, as in early Christian asceticism and of course later, mastery over the flesh without further reference to life on this earth. But this drastic individualism soon gave way to the conception of a more extensive Christian ideal. The mediaeval conception still retained the view that the Christian society existed to prepare souls for the after life; but with what Weber called the "ascetic" branches of Protestantism, notably Calvinism and its derivatives, there emerged the direct conception of the Kingdom of God on Earth, which it was the duty of man to create by Divine ordinance. This whole idea of mastery, then, has oriented man to the control of the world in which he lives as distinct from a fatalistic "acceptance" of things as they are. Such acceptance has of course appeared from time to time in Christian societies and groups, but has never been the dominant keynote to anything like the extent it has been in the Orient. Furthermore, though we have undergone a high degree of secularization, even our secularism is active rather than passive. It is not "floating along on the stream of life," but is an attempt

to make over the world by active intervention, in the service of human goals, it is an attempt to create the "good society."

Universalism, as the second dominant strain, is closely connected with activism. Its roots lie in the conception of the universal and only true God of the Prophets and the intelligible world as conceived by the Greek intellect. Neither ideas nor morality can be relative to the particular time and place and social group. There must be universal truths, which are as true for the "heathen Chinees" as they are for any Christian group. And the moral good cannot be defined in terms only of what is good for others, as distinguished from good for me, but the same principles must apply impartially to all men, with allowance for difference of circumstance of course, but nevertheless in principle to all. The enormous significance of this universalistic strain in Western civilization is one of the principal themes of the modern social sciences. And there can be little doubt that without Christianity it could scarcely have developed.

Three fields of application of these two major strains of the Christian tradition may be mentioned. First is the very notable fact that, in spite of the prominence of the "warfare of science and religion," it is only in the Western world that science itself has developed to a really high degree. Beginnings there are elsewhere, but in no case, except for a few specialties, beyond the level attained by the classical Greeks. Many Christians certainly have grave misgivings about where the development of science is leading us. But science is most assuredly a fully legitimate child of Christianity (which, however, is only *one* of its "parents"). It is the *active* and not merely the receptive search for truth. Nature is not merely observed, it is *investigated*, nature is "forced to give up her secrets," not merely contemplated. Man, precisely because he is conceived to be made "in the image of God" is endowed with reason which he is meant to use actively to understand. In Puritanism this strain reached a high culmination in giving direct religious sanction to the great development of physical science of the 17th century. The key-note was that the scientist could come to know God through His Works.<sup>5</sup> The place of universalism in science is too fundamental and obvious to need special comment.

A second fundamental direction of Christian influence is in the field of the universalism of law. This of course was foreshadowed

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. K. Merton, *Science and Society in 17th Century England*.



by the great development of Roman law, in part a child of Greek thought, notably that of the Stoics. But after the decline of Rome law in the Western World had sunk to the level of a completely tribal pluralism; there was one law for Goth and another for Frank and so on. It is no matter of chance that it was in the Canon Law of the Church that Roman Law was preserved, and that the great development of mediaeval civilization as a whole soon came to include the revival of Roman Civil Law and the gradual creation of universalistic systems of law. Had a particularistic rather than a universalistic religion dominated Mediaeval Europe there is little doubt that Roman Law would never have been revived and English Common Law never created.

Finally, we are all aware that there is a fundamental strain of universalistic individualism in Christianity. Each human being has an immortal soul, all of the same religious worth. Though many branches of Christianity have made drastic concessions to social inequality reaching far beyond the minimum needs of a functioning society, generally on the plea that equality applied only to the spiritual realm, there is little doubt of the fundamental character of the contribution of Christianity to the egalitarian strain of modern Western civilization; the most dramatic contrast of course is the religious sanction of caste in Hinduism, the most radical conception of human inequality to be found anywhere. The relation to the conception of the dignity of the human individual, and his right to a fair chance to make his contribution to the life of society and to live his own life independently, is patent.

It should not be assumed that the above argument about the very great influence of religious traditions constitutes a theory of "religious determinism" set over against some version of "economic determinism." There seems to us to be no justification for any simple "single dominant factor" theory of social change. The religious movements we have spoken of were not "immaculately conceived" without roots in all the complex social and psychological forces which influence human action. *Of course* the emergence of Christianity was *in part* economically determined; for example, it is well known that most of its early adherents were the "little men" of the urban communities. That it appealed neither to the rural populations (the "pagans") nor to the upper classes, is partly a function of the economic interests of those groups. It was also dependent for peace and order, and for its opportunity to spread

on the political and legal structure of the Roman Empire which was in no sense predominantly a "religious factor." But demonstration of the importance of these things in no way refutes the claim of the importance of creative innovation in the sphere of religious orientation itself. Economic and other "conditions" limit the incidence of a religious movement, for example, they favor or hinder it, but that is a very different matter from "creating" it. Similarly in the course of its very complex history the various developments within Christianity have been intimately dependent on non-religious features of the situation of the time. It seems to be well attested that Luther's success could not have occurred without support from the secular interests of the German Princes on whom he relied. And could the branches of Protestantism which have flourished in America have had their enormous influence if the little colonies had not had a continent over which to spread? Suppose the French had wrested the control of the seas from Britain a hundred and fifty years ago? With North America under French control from the Alleghanies west, what would the religious complexion of this continent have been? A glance at the Province of Quebec is of some significance to the answer.

#### SOME FEATURES OF THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN AMERICA

The college teachers and college students who will be the principal readers of this essay are for the most part citizens of the United States of America. It may therefore be appropriate to call attention to a few of the features of the religious situation in this country which are of particular interest from the point of view of the sociologist and social psychologist.

First, it is a society with such strong religious components in its history, that it seems quite justified to call it a "Christian Society" even though it is rather far advanced in what is sometimes called a "process of secularization." Second, the overwhelmingly predominant influence in that background is "non-conformist" Protestantism. That is, its Protestantism is only secondarily derived from the Anglican Episcopal Church, but it is strongly Anglo-Saxon in its flavor because of the ethnic origin of the overwhelming majority of the earlier settlers.

Though in New England the European conception of Church and State as correlative was the original pattern, the seeds of religious toleration which were present in the non-conformist churches

of the English and Dutch Reformations combined with the secularism derived from the French Enlightenment to establish not only religious toleration in the British form, but also the separation of Church and State as the fundamental religious policy of the new Republic, the first case of its occurrence in the Christian world. This in turn meant, far earlier than elsewhere, full toleration in a Protestant community for Catholics and also for Jews. However, though there is official toleration for other religions altogether outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, they have remained negligible, so it is still correct to speak of this as at widest a Judeo-Christian society with a considerable degree of secularization.

The separation of Church and State, related as it was to the diverse denominational complexions of the thirteen colonies, crystalized the system of "denominational pluralism" as the characteristic religious constitution of American society. This fact has undoubtedly had a most important influence on American social development generally and is one of the cardinal features of contemporary America. Its positive influence on growth and stability respectively may be traced above all in two directions. First, in relation to growth, denominational pluralism has had much to do with the fact that this has been to such a preeminent degree an "open society." When it is conservative, religion can be, as we have noted, very conservative indeed. But in American conditions no single united religious organization could acquire the position of influence in the community which would enable it to set the tone for the community as a whole. Though admittedly the contrast is very sharp, the position of the Catholic Church in the Province of Quebec will illustrate what has happened under other conditions. There are of course differing value judgments on such matters. Some feel sincerely that the extent to which French Canada has at least until recently been able to retain a social situation so amazingly close to that of rural France in the 17th Century is its chief glory. But, clearly, America as a world power, as the scene of the greatest industrial development the world has ever seen, as the pioneer in the democratic extension of education and the applications of science, and as the seat of one of the great experiments in political democracy, would be incompatible with such a situation in the field of religion.

There are certain respects in which the American situation is comparable to that of classical Greece, though it is extremely dif-



ferent in others. There the fact that priesthood, so far as it survived at all, became essentially a function of the ordinary citizen, and that there was a pluralism of city states as religious units, effectively prevented well integrated religious groups from influencing the society in the direction of traditionalized crystallization of the culture. Similarly, America could be the land of individualism, of enterprise, of technological innovation and of political experiment to a considerable degree because its religious organization made religious interference with these activities impossible or, where it has sporadically occurred, ineffective.

Second, there is one extremely important respect in which denominational pluralism has served to protect social stability. The larger European countries have of course all been deeply involved in the great social changes of the political and industrial revolutions from the eighteenth century on. In all of them, substantially modified only in England, the basic religious tradition has been that of the established church. In continental Europe everywhere, the development of "modern" attitudes in the context of great economic and social changes, has tended to polarize the population in such a way that the "right" tended to combine the defense of the vested interests of the old upper classes and their political regimes with the defense of religion in the sense of the established church, whereas the "left" tended to attack both the vested interests of the old upper classes and religion as such. This fateful polarization first appeared on a grand scale in the French Revolution and ever since then France has been torn between the "clericals" and the "anti-clericals" as an integral part of the political problems of the society. The identification of the Lutheran Church with the state in Protestant Germany and of the Orthodox Church with the Czarist state in Russia presented similar problems. It is in the light of this situation that the Marxian aphorism "religion is opium for the people" is to be understood. The Anglo-Saxon world has fortunately very largely escaped this accentuation of the instabilities inherent in the recent social changes of Western society. The French "radical," the Marxist and the Nazi versions of bitter hostility to religion as such, have none of them taken root in this country. To be sure we have had our Robert Ingersolls, and our coteries of Marxist intellectuals, but that is a very different matter.

Though the pattern of denominational pluralism has not been congenial to all religious groups, there is little doubt that it has

been so to most of the branches of American Protestantism. But there has been a price and from the religious point of view probably the most important part of that price has been exposure to secularizing influences to a much greater degree than in many other societies. There is no doubt that the degree of direct concern with religious matters which was so characteristic of colonial, and even later, New England has passed out of American life except for a few "fundamentalist" islands. The churches have come to a position where they have to struggle to keep a hold on their people, and some feel it is a losing battle.

Apart from the general tendency to secularization there are from a religious point of view perhaps three areas of difficulty and strain which will repay a word of comment here, though it is not possible to go into them thoroughly. Each of these is particularly distressing to the liberal wing of Protestantism which takes its integration with liberal democracy so very seriously.

1. The first of these is the position of the Catholic Church, a subject so delicate that it is often tactfully passed over in silence. From a sociological point of view there can be little doubt that the rise of the Catholic Church to its present position has introduced what we sociologists call a "structural strain" of considerable proportions into the American society, that there is no easy solution for the problems involved, and that perhaps above all simple tolerant "good will" and avoidance of prejudice is not enough.

There are three main sources of the strain. The first is that the structure of the Church itself, and the kind of relation to secular society which is best adapted to it, are in certain respects out of harmony with the main structure of American society. If rightly understood, the formula that the difficulty centers about the "authoritarian" structure of the Church is on the whole correct. In the religious sphere itself the conception of the Priest as the vicar of God who holds absolute power over religious matters is strongly antithetical to the Protestant conception of the direct relation of the individual to his God, and correspondingly to the Protestant conception of the minister as a leader and teacher not as wielding religious authority directly. Furthermore, through the claim to control all matters of faith and morals the church as an organization has a certain tendency to encroach on the freedom of the individual as that is conceived in relation to our basic doctrine of the separation of Church and State. The church itself seems to be clear on

the issue; it does not believe and never has believed in principle in religious toleration in the specific American sense; it accepts it, because being in a minority status it has no alternative. But there is little question that if the Catholic Church were clearly the dominant religious group, it would tend to work toward the restoration of its old ideal of a society in which all members are Christian in a Catholic sense. This could hardly fail fundamentally to alter the traditional American pattern.

This attitude toward religious authority, particularly as extended into the sphere of "morals" as well as faith, is connected with a variety of other points. Just to single out one, America has, at least since de Toqueville observed it more than a century ago, been notable among Western countries for the freedom of women. In general not only does the Catholic Church forbid divorce and birth control, taking a view not shared by most Protestant denominations, but it puts strong pressure on its adherents to maintain a conservative pattern with respect to the position and interests of women and of the family generally, which is in strong contrast to some of the most prominent general American trends. Certain elements in these trends may be interpreted to be symptoms of disorganization; but others are probably essential features of the adaptation of family life to the conditions of a highly urbanized and industrialized society. It is at least legitimately doubtful whether the official Catholic view of the family and the proper position of women is in the long run compatible with the needs of the type of society which, for better or worse, has developed in the United States.

Second, American Catholicism has been in a special position which differentiates it from its European counterparts because it has mainly been brought in with the great masses of immigrant population. It has thus tended to be associated in special ways with class, ethnic and other social divisions within the population, as shown by the fact that the Catholic population is overwhelmingly urban and concentrated in the Northeast sections of the country. There is some coloring derived from the fact that the Irish group has had such a prominent place in the church, and it has tended to identify religion with a sometimes rather militant nationalism relative to things Protestant and of English origin. In general the Catholic groups have been more recent comers and of lower status than the dominant Protestant groups—hence have become involved



in the kinds of status-tensions which commonly develop between established elites and lower status elements.

The third point concerns the way in which the Catholic Church has tended to modify the competitive relations of denominations with each other in the American scene. There is no doubt that the very features of the Church which Protestants tend to find disturbing give it a certain superior effectiveness as an organization. By using authority in an outspoken way, by strong centralization, by refusing to compromise at many points where most Protestant denominations would compromise, it tends on the whole to keep a more effective control of its people than do most Protestant denominations. Furthermore, and because it is such a large, powerful and well-organized unit, it tends to be able to exercise a greater influence on community affairs, which can moreover be a consistent influence over time and in different places. Though this aspect is, of course, by no means predominant in the religious sphere, it is none the less true that there exists a struggle for power among religious denominations. Precisely *because* of the sincerity of their religious convictions the members of each denomination naturally seek to extend its influence, and much extension of the influence of *any* one *must* be at the expense of some others. The system of denominational pluralism in this respect is necessarily delicately balanced. The emergence of a large and well organized unit to such a prominent position, which is not as well integrated with most of the others as they are with each other, is necessarily a disturbing factor in such a delicately balanced situation.

2. The second major problem field, that of racial and religious prejudice, is closely related to the problem of the Catholic Church. It is precisely one of the most important points at which the values of liberal Protestantism and of American democracy fuse, that there should be sympathetic toleration for all views and practices within the limits compatible with effective order in the community, and lack of interference with the rights of others as individuals or groups. Much in Protestant history, however, and many of the strains in the contemporary situation, both those just discussed and others which are more indirectly manifested, make it difficult for non-Catholics to tolerate Catholicism with full objectivity. Indeed to a sociologist it is not at all surprising that there should be a great deal of anti-Catholic prejudice in non-Catholic circles and vice versa. The basis of this expectation has already been discussed

in general terms. It is most important to distinguish this aspect of strain in the relations of the two groups, from that of structural strain in fitting elements together into a system which has just been discussed. Even if there were no prejudice at all there would still be some conflict. This is a fact of which some religious liberals do not seem to be adequately aware. But at the same time, conflict between groups provides a focus for the phenomena of prejudice to operate on. Attitudes generated in the particular conflict situation are likely to be more extreme than otherwise because of the elements of strain and these attitudes tend to exaggerate the differences making them seem more radical than they really are. Thus over such issues as public support for parochial schools or legislation affecting birth control tempers are very apt to flare up on both sides.

In addition to this there is the well-known "scapegoat" mechanism which social psychologists have greatly illuminated in recent years. The essence of it is very simple. We have spoken of the generation of hostile feelings in all sorts of situations of strain. There is often such strain associated with the relations within groups to which their own solidarity is essential, like families, local communities or indeed church congregations. Since it would be dangerous and wrong to freely express overt antagonism toward the members of the ingroup, it is often psychologically easier to "displace" the affect onto an outgroup in relation to which there already exists some basis of antagonism. Scape-goating thus rarely appears without *some* "reasonable" basis of antagonism in that there is a real conflict of ideals or interests. But it is recognized by the fact of "overreaction." People become excited and agitated out of proportion to the significance of the real occasion for it. Thus, though there is a real conflict of interest, some people see a "Papal plot" to conquer the United States, not by legitimate proselytization of the Catholic Faith, but by Machiavellian political machinations.

Unfortunately, prejudice is not only directed by *individuals* against scapegoat groups, but can readily become a phenomenon of *group* attitude, that is, become partly institutionalized. Then instead of being disapproved by members of one's own group for being prejudiced against the outgroup, one is punished for not being prejudiced.

Among other problems of prejudice the one of greatest interest to religion is that between Christians and Jews in our society. The

tragic story of Hitler's Germany is sufficient evidence that anti-Semitism is much more than a superficial phenomenon in the Western world. Anti-Semitism fortunately has not been nearly so serious in this country, but we all know it exists. The nature of the problem is, however, particularly from the Protestant point of view, very different from that of the Protestant-Catholic situation. In fact, neither in doctrine nor in religious organization is there a comparably serious source of division between Judaism and the more liberal branches of Protestantism. Indeed, Unitarianism is in a strictly religious sense almost indistinguishable from liberal Judaism. The Jews, however, are an ethnically distinct community, with a history of religious distinctness from Christianity and of antagonism symbolized in the extreme case by the epithet of "Christ-killers." But the Jews also happen to be an ethnic group which, for a variety of reasons, has been extraordinarily successful in occupational competition with the native American, on the whole very fairly, and precisely according to American values of enterprise, intelligence and so on. Fundamentally it may be suggested that American anti-Semitism is a version of the "sour-grapes" attitude. There are two main sub-types. One, which may be called "snobbish" anti-Semitism, centers in the groups which are or want to be considered socially elite; its primary manifestation is exclusion of Jews from "select" residential districts, clubs, resorts, and the like. Essentially these people are expressing through the scapegoat mechanism, their own sense of guilt that no longer are they basing their claims to status on the achievements of the individual, in which they are tacitly forced to admit that the Jew is fully their equal, but rather on social class and its symbols. It is not a matter of *what* you do, but of *who* you are. The second variety centers perhaps in the lower middle class, it is "envious" anti-Semitism. Essentially, it is a rationalization of failure or of fear of it. The keynote is always that the Jew wins because he fights unfairly. The "honest man" never has a chance because a "slippery" Jew will always outsmart him. Of the two the latter is by far the more dangerous; it is deeply involved in the protofascist movements which are never wholly absent in this country or anywhere else in the Western world.

3. Finally, the third problem for brief mention is that of the more general relation of religious denominationalism to the class structure. It is well known that in any American community the



churches have a rough rank order of social prestige. In New England the Unitarian and Episcopal churches are those of the "best people," perhaps the Congregationalists next, then the Methodists, then the Baptists, etc. In the South the Presbyterian, because of the Scotch influence, takes the place of the Unitarian. In the Middle West the Methodists rank, relatively, considerably higher. Connected with this is the further fact that people who rise in social status are very likely to change their religion in the process.

Especially to those Protestants who consider any human inequality to be religiously suspect, this is a most distressing situation. Of course a still more distressing set of facts concerns racial segregation, as when Negroes are either not admitted at all or are not very welcome in white churches.

In broad lines, something of this sort may be said to have certain positive functions in American society. The essential point is that some differentiation of class status is inevitable in a society which values personal achievement so highly, which must be dependent on large scale organization, and which at the same time attempts to maintain a workable family system. Wives and children must to some degree share the status of adult men, hence their *differences* of status. But by its very nature the Protestant congregation is a rather loosely organized voluntary group. It depends heavily on spontaneous consensus. This is much easier if its members are all the "kind of people" who readily understand each other. It seems very likely that a religious organization which could effectively cross all class lines on a big scale, would have to approach the established churches of Europe in its organizational structure. The stratification of religious denominations is essentially a result of the looseness of religious organization in general, combined with the fact that America has a very real, if also loose, class hierarchy. It would not be easy to abolish.

#### THE SOCIOLOGIST AS TEACHER

Before concluding we may attempt to speak very briefly of the problems of the teaching of the contributions of sociology and social psychology to the understanding of religion. As we suggested at the beginning of this essay, we consider it central to the values of our society that soundly established knowledge should be *valued*, equally that it should be responsibly disseminated and used. The educated citizen of a free commonwealth cannot be one from whom

essential knowledge is deliberately withheld nor who himself refuses to face essential facts.

But to face facts is not to cultivate the smart "debunking," "know-it-all" attitude. The social scientist above all should know how great a difference is made by the attitude and the context in which things are taught. True sophistication for him and for his students must include a deep humility concerning the limitations of his own knowledge and an equally deep respect for the opinions *and feelings* of others.

The diversity of religious beliefs even within our own society is such that it is obviously impossible for the teacher to agree with them all. He should certainly seek to avoid a shallow eclecticism which is almost as bad as outright bigotry. He should not parade his personal convictions but at the same time in no way seek to evade their relevance or refuse to state them. He should perhaps seek particularly to convey a sense both of the complexity of the intellectual problems and of the depth of the human emotions involved, at the same time that he gives genuine enlightenment and not, again, merely a sense of complication.

It is this writer's strong personal conviction that in the field of religion as elsewhere these requirements for good teaching are at bottom simple applications of the fundamental ethics of science itself. These are essentially two. The first is the *moral* obligation to maximize technical competence. To the scientist, and thus to the teacher of science, there is a positive moral obligation to *know what he is talking about*. This tenet alone enjoins a humility which would eliminate most of earlier positivistic "anti-religious" attitudes in the social sciences. The second is that of the scientist's obligation of responsible integrity in his role as trustee for society of the knowledge he possesses and hence in certain respects of responsibility for its uses. The very basis on which society allows the scientist to do his work at all, presupposes that *as teacher* he will act in the full light of his social responsibilities.

As scientist, then, the sociologist or social psychologist must maintain the fundamental integrity of his high calling; he must be competent, objective, balanced and tentative. He must take responsibility for teaching in such a way as to promote the welfare of his fellows as he sees it. He must be aware that what he does and says may have serious repercussions on others. As scientist he cannot be a partisan of any particular religious faith, but as an individual

he must have a set of personal convictions of his own. He must not attempt to conceal these from his students, but equally must not attempt to use his position as expert and as teacher in order to convert his students to his own views.

The interdependence of the different parts of our culture is such that persons whose primary role is not that of scientist will inevitably make use of the findings of social science in this field in teaching as well as otherwise. We feel that they, also, as good citizens of a liberal society, should feel bound by the ethic of science so far as they use its results. But the highest order of discipline in maintaining a precarious and difficult balance is required of him who has accepted the vocation of the rational understanding of man as his personal vocation.

The scientist, by virtue of his calling, thus cannot, we feel, *directly* give the student a set of convictions to live by—to attempt to do so would be incompatible with his special role. But by giving him an understanding of what many men have lived by in a spirit of humility and respect he can, we feel, help the student to clarify and deepen his own convictions, to reach a position of his own which is more than an “emotional reaction” to the experiences of his life situation, which in line with the great tradition of Christianity, is a rationally thought-through and grounded position. As we noted above, in spite of the elements of conflict which have appeared from time to time, Christianity and science have a very deep foundation in common—it is not by chance that Christian civilization has been the mother of science. The rise of social science and with it of the scientific study of religion itself is a development which is a logical and inevitable outcome of the evolution of Christianity itself. There can, in this writer’s view, be no inherent and inevitable conflict.

#### IN CONCLUSION

This essay has covered, in a most fragmentary and inadequate fashion, a few of the highlights of the relations between religion and society as they appear important to, and capable of illumination by, the social sciences of sociology and social psychology.

There are perhaps two outstanding impressions I would hope the reader will take away with him after reading this. The first is that, in a society where the academic disciplines are perhaps more secularized than the rest of the society, there has, as a result



of scientific study of religion and society in these disciplines and in history and anthropology, emerged an overwhelming impression of the fundamental importance of religion in human affairs. Like the historian, the sociologist can now say unequivocally, that the fairly recent popular positivistic view that religion was essentially grounded in the ignorance and superstition of a pre-scientific age, and could be expected rapidly to disappear in our era, is definitely in error. The proponent of this view is the victim of his own ignorance and counter-superstition. True, *many specific features* of historic religions are related to a low level of scientific development and could not persist in a scientific age. But this is not true of the fundamental significance of religion. What purports to be the abolition of religion is really only a new form of it; in exactly the same sense in which it has been rightly said that the philosopher who purports to abolish metaphysics is only indulging in a naive and uncritical brand of metaphysics. By implication he is making assumptions about the nature of ultimate reality which will not stand up to sophisticated philosophical criticism. So it is with religion.

The second crucial fact is that religion is involved in all the deepest complexities of the human lot. While inevitable, and certainly in the broadest sense good since human life is good, religion is not good in the "polyannaish" sense. It registers, in the human record, man's faith and love, but also his moments of deepest despair, his hatred of life and of his fellow men. Religion, in short, to whatever degree it may or may not be divinely inspired, is human in the fullest sense, as tragedy and sin are human.

The reader may feel that in the foregoing discussion the "seamy side" of religion has been unduly stressed. If there is a bias in this direction a word of exoneration may be permitted. As we noted above, American temper leans in the overoptimistic direction, and the temper of its dominant religion is on the whole no exception. If we Americans are to be not only a prosperous and a powerful people, but a great people in the deeper sense of historical greatness, we must achieve a high level of "maturity." Maturity in this sense is never aided by refusing to face the truth about ourselves or the world. To know the truth to its fullest, and not to be dismayed is one of the marks of genuine maturity. Surely the deeper interests of religion as well as of secular society can only be served by helping, in any little way that is possible, those of a generation on whom

the burden of great responsibility will soon fall, to see with clarity and understanding and humility what the world they live in is like.

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#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Both in order to record my indebtedness for many of the ideas put forward in this essay, and to guide the reader who might wish to go farther, it seems well to append a brief bibliographical note.

In terms of fundamental theory what may be called the "modern" sociology of religion rests overwhelmingly on the work of two men, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Durkheim's most important direct contributions to the field are published in his last book, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, available in English translation as *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, published by the Free Press. Several of his other works, however, are relevant. For Max Weber the most important contributions are in the three volumes entitled in German *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. Perhaps the best-known part of this was translated by the present author, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The remainder of the first volume, the study of Confucianism and Taoism, has just appeared in translation by Hans Gerth as *The Religion of China* (The Free Press). The other two volumes, on Hinduism and Buddhism and on Ancient Judaism, are in process of translation by Professor Gerth. Some excerpts from them are included in the collection *From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology*, edited by Gerth and Mills.

Perhaps some of the most important "sociological" studies besides those of Durkheim and Weber, are by historians of religion and civilization. Among these may be mentioned especially W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise* (greatly influenced by Durkheim), and above all Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (a contemporary and close friend of Weber).

Another most important source is from anthropological studies of the religion of non-literate peoples. There is a very voluminous literature in this field. We will mention only, first the classical starting point, E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, and most especially B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, and *Coral Gardens and their Magic*. On more special points such as witchcraft see Clyde Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, and E. E. Evans-Pritchard,

*Azande Witchcraft*. A recent general work is William J. Goode, *The Religion of the Primitives*.

On the psychological side two works stand out as pre-eminent. The first is the classic of William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The second, with all the reservations which must be attached to them, the works of Freud on religion, *Totem and Taboo*, *The Future of an Illusion*, and *Moses and Monotheism*. These works should, however, be read very much in relation to Freud's psychological theories, and not just as monographs on religion.

Finally, an author inevitably draws on his own previous work, so attention may be called to the principal treatments of religion in that work. First is *The Structure of Social Action*, especially Chapters XI, XIV, XV, and XVII. This book contains a careful general analysis of the theories of Durkheim and Weber, on religion as well as other subjects. Then there is an essay republished in *Essays in Sociological Theory*, on "The Theoretical Development of the Sociology of Religion" (Chapter IV). Finally a new work, *The Social System*, (1951), contains considerable discussion of religion, particularly in Chapters VIII and IX.









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